MODERN ECCLESIOLOGY and the PRINCIPLE of *LAÏCITÉ* [1]

A Philosophical Understanding with an Eye to Posthumanity [2]

[An exploratory essay]
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Introduction

This *philosophical* understanding deals with one particular aspect of *laïcité* abstracted from the notion of secularization current in the Western Anglophone population. The particular aspect of the principle of *laïcité* consists of new interpretations that, in fact, amount to a shift in philosophical conceptions within ecclesial and secular political perspectives. Western posthuman philosophical interpretation will not be undertaken from the same philosophical perspective in the future as it was in the Medieval past since European science has given rise to a technological civilization. What makes this drive to technology so significant is that many philosophers still unrealistically believe that they are working to liberate mankind from its earlier fetters imposed by the natural order and classical traditions. In George Grant's words:

> Man has at last come of age in the evolutionary process, has taken his fate into his own hands and is freeing himself for happiness against the old necessities of hunger and disease and overwork, and the consequent oppressions and repressions. The conditions of nature — that "otherness" — which so long enslaved us, when they appeared as a series of

[1] Some Catholic readers may be familiar with Giuseppe Alberigo's understanding of the term as outlined in "Facteurs de laïcité au Concile Vatican II" in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, tome 74, fas. 2, 2000, in which he writes in a footnote: *"Ce mot est utilisé dans le sens du processus de 'déclericalisation' à l'interieur de l'Église et non pas pour indiquer une orientation pour l'autonomie de l'État vis-à-vis de l'Église."* My approach is the opposite. I understand the term to indicate the autonomy of both the Church and State from each other as organizations in their respective realms of jurisdiction.

[2] I say "posthumanity," not "post-classical," because while at first blush it may appear that Western philosophy has advanced beyond the classical age of philosophy, the high degree of technological intervention (unavailable in the classical age) indicates, not only an advancement, but an alteration of the human being's status within creation. Yet, many philosophers maintain that a classical understanding of human nature is sufficient in the modern world. But this may not remain the case. That is to say, "when computer science is combined with quantum physics and nanotechnology, the result may soon be a combination of a human being and machine" (Hellsten, Sirkku (2012:5) "The Meaning of Life" during a Transition from Modernity and Postmodernity *Journal of Anthropology*) [https://www.hindawi.com/journals/janthro/2012/210684/].

> unknown forces, are now at last beginning to be understood in their workings so that they can serve our freedom. [3]

All aspects of contemporary life are affected by this new technological paradigm which continues to raise new philosophical questions, to which the answers cannot always be anticipated in advance. Thus, the modern context is philosophically existential and we are "here" in a new intellectual "land," that is in fact a *terra incognita* from the perspective of philosophical interpretation. With respect to religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular, many philosophers are uncertain as to their understanding and acceptance of God and religious faith from a civic political perspective in the relationship between Church and State.

Within a possible posthuman perspective, the central philosophical question about God becomes not "does God exist?" (which is the humanist philosophical question), but, rather "what place in posthuman conscious reflection do God and religion occupy, if any?" (The significance of this question for the principle of *laïcité* should become apparent as this inquiry proceeds.) Alternatively expressed the issue may be stated: has Christian revelation, as couched in terms of the past, been decisively received, once and for all, and accepted as adequate for future understanding? To answer this question the posthuman philosopher and theologian need to review the influence of "classical" humanism in the Church from an historical perspective to understand how we arrived where we are today on the threshold of humanity. It must be borne in mind that the movements in religious and secular history, though related, cannot be synchronized but each developed along its particular timeline. Given the many facts that I could have selected in speculating about posthumanity, I consider the understanding of the evolution of human consciousness to be key in revealing the dimension of posthuman theism, thus allowing for a new concept of humanity. [4] In the evolution of human consciousness towards posthumanity there arises the possibility of a revised philosophical understanding of the human being as both effecting and affected by the intervention of technology and scientific progress. The increase in the intervention of technology and science in human affairs invites reconsidering a new ecclesiological perspective

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[3] Grant, George (1969:28) *Technology and Empire* Anansi.

[4] For the interested reader Leslie Dewart's *Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature* is a good introductory text. (University of Toronto Press, 1989)

on the Church at the threshold of posthumanity. This reconsideration has begun in the documents of Vatican II, I contend.

Part I

The Ecclesiology of *Gaudium et Spes* [5]

To my mind, the phenomenological philosophical perspective evident in *Gaudium et Spes*, although not readily apparent to all, provides an opportunity to explore the notions of effectivity and affectivity in the human person. Thus, I explore this pastoral constitution from the perspective of literary criticism without specific reference to the orthodoxy of catechetical or theological intent, although they overlap. A task of modern philosophers has been to distinguish clearly between the disciplines of philosophy and theology. This task of distinguishing the two will continue to evolve within the posthuman understanding of intellectual activity. Thus, I seek out evidence of this in *Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity) and *Dignitatis Humanae* (the Declaration on Religious Liberty).

The Council addresses the modern "world as the theatre of human history, bearing the marks of its travail, triumphs and failures" which includes many philosophical perspectives concerning the meaning of the individual in society. [6] In its contemporary philosophical structure and intellectual goals, the church "is not motivated by earthly ambition but is interested in one thing only — to carry on the work of Christ …." [7] Therefore, as I see it, the church poses no direct threat to the correct understanding of the principle of *laïcité*. [8] In reading the signs of the times the Council recognized a crisis of growth in human consciousness and that "in the gradual and precise unfolding of the laws of social living [people] are uncertain about how to plot its course" and that

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[5] All quotes from *Gaudium et Spes*, *Ad Gentes Divinitus* and *Dignitatis Humanae* are taken from Flannery, Austin (1996) *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents* Costello Publishing (N.Y.) and Dominican Publications (Ireland).

[6] *Gaudium et Spes* Article 2.

[7] GS Art. 3.

[8] For the purposes of this essay, I consider the principle of *laïcité* as a current end-product of the long evolutionary relationship between Church and State culminating in the "Peace of Westphalia" in 1648 which, in turn, laid the foundations for the modern Nation-State. The principle of *laïcité* defines a place (theoretically and practically) for religion in society while respecting public order and public institutions. Vatican Council II recognized the autonomy and independence of civil society stating that the civil authority need not recognize any superior jurisdiction to itself in regulating its own affairs.

"if there is a growing exchange of ideas, there is still a widespread disagreement in competing ideologies about the meaning of the words which express our key concepts." [9] As "competing ideologies" I perceive a tension between the Church and State. The Church, a religious ideology, and the modern State, a secularized ideology, are two differing images of Western society which are formalized and autonomously govern their respective affairs. [10]

Foreshadowing the evolution from humanism (with its historical examples) to posthumanism (with its speculations about the future) the Council noted that there are developments "on the intellectual level by the mathematical, natural and human sciences and on the practical level by their repercussions on technology." [11] This insight is proving to be significant given the many and various studies in posthumanism and transhumanism arising out of the literature of science fiction. The Council further acknowledged that "in many places it is not only in philosophical terms that such trends are expressed, there are signs of them in literature, art, the humanities, the interpretation of history and even *civil law*: all of which is very disturbing to many people" [my italics]. [12] But the principle of *laïcité*, when correctly understood, need not be disturbing to the religiously faithful. With more emphasis on a philosophical understanding and less emphasis on a political understanding the application of the principle of *laïcité* can have a positive outcome from both the perspectives of Church and State. As I hope to show, the principle of *laïcité* interpreted from the philosophical perspective evident in *Gaudium et Spes* can protect the faithful from disturbances within the faith and lessen civil strife over religious differences in the larger community.

In Western civilization there is a need for a philosophy to serve humanity in its contemporary religious and multicultural life and serve as a preparation for a posthuman life. I suggest that an acceptance of the traditional concept of Christendom, a religious agency of cause and effect, is no longer adequate for the modern world and will most likely be questioned from a philosophical

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[9] GS Art. 4.

[10] In my view, as images in Western society Church and State hide their ideologies. The Church, in its relations with the State, conceals an ideology of a modified Christendom to which it hopes to return. The State, on the other hand, seeks the secularity of a neutral entity through ideologies concealed in a contemporary entertainment industry, the mass media and global politics.

[11] GS Art. 5.

[12] GS Art. 7.

perspective within a posthuman world. In the Council's words: "People are becoming conscious that the forces they have unleashed are in their own hands and that it is up to themselves to control them or be enslaved by them." [13] In short, God is not responsible for everything anymore. I contend, it is from this perspective that the principle of *laïcité* is to be interpreted. Political ideologies, religious or secular, need to be regulated if solutions to civil strife are to be found that are truly human. For this to occur "the establishment of a universally acknowledged public authority vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for the law" must take place. [14] The principle of *laïcité*, properly enacted has the potential to point a way here. Quoting Hebrew scripture to affirm the divine origin of humanity, the Council employs the phrase "the image of God" in *Gaudium et Spes*. I find it a philosophical curiosity that it omits the clause "and in our likeness" in its wording. [15] Does this omission suggest an intention to direct theologians away from considering a status for humanity that may be greater than a mere image? From my Western philosophical perspective "image" and "likeness" are to be distinguished. The term "likeness" connotes a sense of a divine quality that the term "image," with its roots in sense experience according to Ledger Wood, lacks. [16] As I see it, the Hebrew text, by employing both terms, removes the possibility of positing that God was dependent upon any previous creaturely image in creating humanity. But that is a thought for another discussion for linguists, philosophers and theologians.

Traditionally, human dignity or ennoblement was understood by theologians to be pertaining exclusively to the characteristics of the intellect and moral consciousness understood as one law when applied to an individual human being. That is to say in the Council's words concerning individual human beings, "their dignity rests in observing this law, and by it they will be judged." [17] In short, dignity (ennoblement) was attached to the unique mental qualities of the human being which thus set it apart. In modern times, however, the Council noted that "there is a growing awareness of the sublime dignity of human persons, who stand above all things and whose rights

[13] GS Art. 10. In this context, the visible presence of the Church and the visible presence of the State, both are signs of effective and affective existential power.
[14] GS Art. 82
[15] Cf. Gen. I: 26-27.
[16] Cf. Ledger Wood, s. v. "Image" in *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (Ed. Dagobert Runes, 1963) Littlefield Adams.
[17] GS Art. 16.

and duties are universal and inviolable." [18] Thus, dignity (ennoblement) is now understood as constitutive of the individual being itself (male or female) as a human person, and not simply as a quality attached to a superior intellect and consciousness. [19]

Acknowledged in the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*, is a unique intellectual development within Christendom, i.e., atheism and its relative, anti-theism. Both, in the mind of the Church, prevent humanity from attaining the "the noble state to which it was born." [20] And yet, from a Christian perspective the faithful must be atheists in regard to all other gods appearing in the natural and unredeemed order. The Council is correct in deploring the discrimination between believers and unbelievers which some civil authorities unjustly continue to promote, especially through a misunderstanding of the principle of *laïcité.* [21] The Council seeks the betterment of the person and the improvement of society. While both are significant in the church's teaching in *Gaudium et Spes*, they are not equivalent, but dependent upon each other. "The social order and its development must constantly yield to the good of the person, since the order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons and not the other way around…, the document states." [22] I hope to show, then, that properly understood the principle of *laïcité* has the good of the faithful and the good of the citizenry as a goal. Freed from the fetters of State responsibility, the faithful can then truly preach the gospel without earthly ambitions of empire. Such autonomy, if ever realized, will carry with it a responsibility to raise the level of human culture in the social order. As the Council noted: "To help individuals to carry out more carefully their obligations in conscience towards themselves and towards the various groups to which they belong, they must be carefully educated to a higher degree of culture" which is required for service to the community at large, believers and unbelievers alike. [23]

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[18] GS Art. 26.

[19] It is to be noted that from a Western philosophical and legal perspective, not all human beings are human persons. Being and personhood are not to be equated.

[20] GS Art. 21.

[21] Understood correctly the principle of *laïcité* does not require believers to become unbelievers. As a French text expresses it: *La laïcité garantit aux croyants et aux non-croyants le même droit à la liberté d'expression de leurs croyances ou convictions. Elle assure aussi bien le droit d'avoir ou de ne pas avoir de religion, d'en changer ou de ne plus en avoir. Elle garantit le libre exercice des cultes et la liberté de religion, mais aussi la liberté vis-à-vis de la religion: personne ne peut être contraint au respect de dogmes ou prescriptions religieuses.* [https://www.gouvernement.fr/qu-est-ce-que-la-laicite]

[22] GS Art. 26.

[23] GS Art. 31.

This task of carrying out obligations in conscience in the social order of humanity is to be accomplished by believers in the light of revelation, according to the Council, and not by God. That is to say, in the social order of humanity the believer is co-agent with God. The community of humanity "now produces by its own enterprise many things which in former times it expected would come largely from heavenly powers." [24] Philosophically, human intellectual understanding within a "higher degree of culture" discloses the "creative agency" within humanity. Thus, creative agency is not reserved to God alone. Adopting this perspective illustrates a significant shift in the church's self-understanding in the modern world. It is to be further noted that a human creative agency in earthly affairs does not exclude the presence of God to earthly affairs, according to the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*. Rather, a co-creative relationship between humanity and God is envisioned by the framers of the document. That is to say, in light of this document's pastoral intention I interpret the Council's teaching on material creation such that the human person (as being composed of matter and spirit) is part of material creation, albeit a unique part. This philosophical insight has great implications for posthuman understanding in light of an advancing digital technology. "By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws. These, as the methods proper to every science and technique must be respected." [25] It appears that the traditional understanding that "persons are *in* the world, but not *of* the world" will require a philosophical re-assessment.

As I interpret Chapter IV of *Gaudium et Spes*, it opens with a significant paragraph intended as an introduction to Part II of the constitution. "All we have said up to now about the dignity of the human person, the community of men and women, and the deep significance of human activity, provides a basis for discussing the relationship between the church and the world and the dialogue between them. The council now intends to consider the presence of the church in the world, and its life and activity there, in the light of what it has already declared about the mystery of the church." [26] Philosophically, it is worth noting that the "world" (composed of ethnic social realities – often recognized as national States.) formally and informally undertakes its own discussion with

[24] GS Art. 33.
[25] GS Art. 36.
[26] GS Art. 40.

the church (a transnational social reality). [27] To my mind, this discussion presents an opportunity for the philosopher to re-consider the principle of *laïcité* within a dialogue between Church and State from a contemporary philosophical perspective. [28] From a political perspective, many philosophers recognize that the current political dialogue between Church (the faithful) and State (the citizenry) is not between equal partners, nor is it undertaken in a spirit of cooperation, but rather in one of confrontation and lack of trust. Suggesting a contrary view, the Council emphasizes that "by its nature and mission the church is universal in that it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system. Hence, it can form a very close bond among the various communities of people and nations, provided they trust the church and guarantee it true freedom to carry out its mission. … The church desires nothing more ardently than that it should develop in freedom in the service of all, under any regime which recognizes the basic rights of the person and the family, and the requirements of the common good." [29] To my mind, this understanding which is not exclusive is compatible with a proper understanding of the principle of *laïcité* and its emphasis on freedom for all. This compatibility deserves encouragement from all people who understand rapid social and cultural change. The church admits that it is open to receiving something from the world. The constitution reads: "Nowadays when things change so rapidly and thought patterns differ so widely, the church needs to step up this exchange by calling upon the help of people who are living in the world, who are expert in its organizations and its forms of training, and who understand its mentality, in the case of believers and non-believers alike." [30]

After treating specifically of the family, love and marriage the Council considers the development of certain cultural issues stating that, "whenever, therefore, there is a question of human life, nature and culture are intimately linked together" such that "one is entitled to speak of a new age of

[27] Not all nations are States. However, the modern notion of a nation-State is likely to remain a political reality for well into the future of global administration. It is currently the primary model for political territorial organization and the locus for the optional use of coercive political power. In understanding modern life many hold that political identity belongs to the State and cultural identity belongs to the nation. Cultural identity is characterized by intimacy and plurality of communities. Political identity is characterized by a lack of intimacy and a tendency to uniformity of organization.

[28] For those interested in a brief and alternative treatment see my *Religion and Governance: Re-thinking the American Perspective* Lambert Academic Publishing (2017).

[29] GS Art. 42.

[30] GS Art. 44.

human history; hence new ways are opened up for the development and diffusion of culture." [31] The principle of *laïcité*, then, properly understood as a modern philosophical and sociological principle belongs to the development and diffusion of culture, as I interpret the Council's pastoral intent. As a philosophical principle *laïcité* transcends mere political opinion. As a French text states: *La laïcité n'est pas une opinion parmi d'autres mais la liberté d'en avoir une. Elle n'est pas une conviction mais le principe qui les autorise toutes, sous réserve du respect de l'ordre public.* [32] The Council continues: "In pastoral care sufficient use should be made, not only of theological principles, but also of the findings of the secular sciences, especially psychology and sociology: in this way the faithful will be brought to a purer and more mature living of the faith." [33]

Laïcité, is an intellectual concept arising out of the mentality of the nation-State, often simply known as the State. Philosophically, the State itself is a human intellectual and normative construct originating in the science that treats of the organization of social goals. [34] The language of *Gaudium et Spes*, does not speak of the State as a substantive reality, but rather as a representation of a concrete social, political and civic community. The constitution reads, "the choice of the political regime and the appointment of rulers are left to the free decision of the citizens. It follows that political authority, either within the political community as such or through organizations representing the State, must be exercised within the limits of the moral order and directed towards the common good…," which citizens are bound to obey in conscience. [35] In short, from a philosophical perspective, the mind of the Council is that the State is an abstract and changeable concept constituted by political regimes. In light of my philosophical inquiry, the following paragraph makes sense in the contemporary context. "The political community [defined by State boundaries] and the church [characterized as transcending State boundaries] are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields. They are both at the service of the personal and social vocation of the same individuals, though under different titles." [36] Therefore, to my mind,

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[31] GS Art. 53 & 54.
[32] [https://www.gouvernement.fr/qu-est-ce-que-la-laicite]
[33] GS Art. 62.
[34] Cf. James K. Feibleman, s. v. "Politics" in *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (Ed. Dagobert Runes, 1963) Littlefield Adams.
[35] GS Art. 74.
[36] GS Art. 76.

it is curious that these titles lead to confrontation, rather than cooperation in their relationship. As I see it, the content of *Gaudium et Spes*, and the principle of *laïcité* raise philosophical issues inviting a reinterpretation of "Church and State" that will likely continue to concern the Church and State in a posthuman world.

I now turn to the philosophical self-conception of the church in the modern world with an eye to the church's possible posthuman context. In Part II I shall discuss the principle of *laïcité* vis-à-vis ecclesial self-conception. But first a few background remarks are necessary. The Vatican II documents that define the norms for a modern ecclesiology present a new model for defining the separation of Church and State that is more in accord with contemporary and future philosophical perspectives.

In light of these perspectives, I follow a Continental philosophical approach in preference to an American or analytical perspective. That is to say, the meanings I assign to terms and concepts will sometimes vary significantly from those understood and accepted by philosophers familiar only with American philosophy. As an example, American "civil rights" translates into Continental "public freedoms." These freedoms are not natural to the individual human being and are not to be used against the State which has initiated and guards them. Rather, the State defines and limits a human right to be enjoyed by an individual subject to the proper authority of law. In short, public freedoms are acquired through law. They are not inherent in humanity. Further, such freedoms are realized by cooperating with the State and not by opposing the State.

Historically, in the West two dominant models have described the relationship between Church and State. The first is caesaropapism, a political model, whereby the religious authority is absolutely subordinated to the State. This is the most common model in the history of Western civilization. The second model is a that of a theocratic State, often theologically and philosophically nuanced, yet territorially organized whereby the religious authority is independent and dominates the State authority, even when the State authority espouses, to some degree, religious values. As either model evolves into the postmodern era, religious power ought not to be a consequence of the legislation of the State. As part of the definition of the modern State the political authority possesses a monopoly and the legitimate use of force or power over its citizens.

This understanding is characteristic of the traditional separation of Church and State expressed in the form of a Concordat which is the type of State policy with respect to the Catholic religion. The modern Concordat, in fact, amounts to an arrangement of a religious ideology vis-à-vis a State ideology with each independent and autonomous in its own realm. In this essay I accept that perspective and in Part II I focus on the principle of *laïcité* and the self-conception of the Church.

Part II

Ecclesial Self-conception and *Laïcité*

In this part of the essay, I discuss some clues buried in the two documents, *The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* and *The Declaration on Religious Liberty* revealing a proper understanding of the principle of *laïcité* from the Church's perspective. In the relationship between the Church and State, the church is not an equal partner as was noted above seen since the Church is not a modern State in any sense of the word. The Church conceives itself as a community of believers united in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, and founded upon the apostles. [37] Thus, the principles of missionary activity are not expressed a political language of State, but in a theological language of a hierarchical community. Concerning the Second Vatican Council, Robert Adolfs insightfully notes that "essentially, the Council was little more than a professional discussion between administrators of the Church, but popular imagination turned it into a spiritual rebirth of the Church. … But the real limitation of the Council was this — it was in principle an affair of the clergy…," plus, from my perspective, acting as if they constituted a modern State. [38] Although evident in particular situations, the self-understanding of the church universal is evident in the norms of missionary activity applied within non-catechized nations. "Although the church possesses in itself the totality and fullness of the means of salvation, it does not always, in fact cannot, use every one of them immediately, but it has to make beginnings and work by slow stages to give effect to God's plan." [39] In short, in the modern world humans share agency with God. Whether God's plan is "fixed" or is open to development in cooperation with humans remains a debateable philosophical issue, to my mind. I favour the latter.

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[37] *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*, (MA) Para. 1
[38] Adolfs, Robert (1966:9) *The Grave of God* Harper & Row.
[39] MA Para. 6.

Missionary activity implants the structure of a collegiate hierarchy, characteristic of the church universal, in the nations. However, this hierarchy is conceived as an administrative authority of a world-wide communion without any territory traditionally characteristic of a State. The exception, of course, is the Vatican City State administered by this same authority whose head of State is the Pope. Thus, one could argue that in the modern world there are two socially organized representatives of the church, i.e., the universal Christian community and a particular city state, i.e., the Vatican. This distinction is significant for a proper understanding of the civic principle of *laïcité*. The universal ecclesial community is composed of individuals conceived within the understanding of a particular Christian human nature within creation. This is in contrast to the modern State which conceives of no particular human nature except that of the citizen who is "equal" within its boundaries, i.e., no one is above its law. Thus, in light of modern philosophy, "Church vs State" could be be re-phrased as "Christian human nature" (subject to God) vs "the egalitarian human nature of the State" subject to no authority above the State. Or, alternatively conceived, in light of contemporary ecclesiology, what is the status of the Christian understanding of human nature in a State espousing the principle of *laïcité*? In interpreting this question, confrontation ought to be replaced by cooperation, since Christian and secular philosophical perspectives both seek the betterment of the person and its environment in the modern world.

While interested in its status within the State, "the church, nevertheless, has no desire to become involved in the government of the temporal order," [40] which would thus free it from competing with the civil authority, as I interpret it. However, the lay Christian faithful, (distinguished from the faithful as hierarchy) have a particular task to fill in missionary activity. "The laity, that is Christians who have been incorporated into Christ and live in the world, are of primary importance and worthy of special care. It is for them, imbued with the Spirit of Christ, to be a leaven animating and directing the temporal order from within, so that everything is always carried out in accordance with the will of Christ." [41] The laity are thus assigned the responsibility for the regulation of the temporal order, or that of politics. Therefore, Christians, within an egalitarian human community, are organized along norms characteristic of a civic state as evidenced in this Decree. The assembly of the faithful constitutes a social life which has a stability and permanence and its own officials

[40] MA Para. 12.
[41] MA Para. 15.

as leaders (priests) who are subject to an overseer (a bishop). Thus, lay people living within the State's boundaries are to establish an order of love and justice by means of apostolic and civil action "embodied in suitable canonical legislation.". [42] The hierarchy for its part seems to have a different role vis-à-vis the State. "Bishops and priests must think and live with the universal church, becoming more and more imbued with a sense of Christ and the church." [43] As I see it, the principle of *laïcité* only pertains to lay Christians since the hierarchy has already excluded itself from temporal affairs. This fact is further reinforced by the Decree when it states that "the church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy. … The lay faithful belong fully to the people of God and civil society. They belong to the nation into which they were born…." [44]

In its present structure, one aspect of the church is organized in a way that mirrors the structure of the modern secular State, without being a State. The overseeing body of the missionary organization is the Propagation of the Faith which functions as coordinator of ecclesial activity throughout the world following the constitutional pattern of the church's contemporary self-conception. The Decree notes that "this congregation should be both an instrument of administration and an organ of dynamic direction, that it should use scientific methods and instruments adapted to modern conditions, that it be guided by present-day research in theology, methodology and pastoral missionary work." [45] Notably absent is the role of philosophy in the church's orientation towards the future in which religion and science will most likely dominate human culture for some time. It seems, however, that classical philosophy continues to suffice according to the view of the Council Fathers for the good of the missions and for the good of the church at large. But an appropriate change in philosophical thinking can be envisioned as humanity moves to a posthuman stage from my perspective. A change in philosophical thinking will no doubt have profound effect on the relationship between Church and State.

The *Declaration on Religious Liberty* also reflects modern notions in accord with the principle of *laïcité* promoted by the State. This Declaration notes that people today "demand constitutional

[42] MA Para. 19.
[43] MA Para. 19.
[44] MA Para. 21.
[45] MA Para. 29.

limitation of the powers of government" when responsible freedom, ecclesial or civil, is exercised within their community. [46] As I read the signs of the times, the following paragraph from the Declaration would receive little, if any, objection from the promotors of the contemporary principle of *laïcité.* "The Vatican council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that everyone should be immune from coercion by individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within due limits, no men or women are forced to act against their convictions nor are any persons to be restrained from acting in accordance with their convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in association with others. … This right of the human person to religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society as will make it a civil right." [47] Besides religious freedom, among civil rights (public freedoms) is the expectation by citizens to be free from any civil strife caused by the differences of belief or culture among religious bodies. The principle of *laïcité* seeks harmony within the State by regulating the signs of religious belief, or convictions, by citizens authorized by the State to exercise legitimate power. An analysis of Western history shows that a combination of power and religious conviction often leads to an abuse of power and a debasing of religious conviction engendering civil strife. The Council admits that civil society has a right to protect itself from abuses committed in the name of religious conviction. Such protection is dependent upon the civil authority establishing norms that "are necessary for the effective protection of the rights of all citizens and for the peaceful settlement of the conflicts of rights. They are also necessary for the adequate protection of that just public peace which is to be found where people live together in good order and true justice. … All these matters are basic to the common good and belong to what is called the public order." [48] To my mind, in the modern world and in anticipation of a posthuman world, the Church needs to befriend the State and the State needs to understand the Church.

[46] *Declaration on Religious Liberty* (RL) Para. 1.
[47] RL Para. 2
[48] RL Para. 7.